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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: SOUTH AMERICA,
VENEZUELA, BRAZIL, BOLIVIA; SAO PAULO

"Regional Disintegration"

Former Brazilian Ambassador in Washington Rubens Barbosa maintained in center-right O Estado de S. Paulo (5/9): "Less than one and a half year after the creation of the South American Community of Nations, the process of regional integration has taken a course that Brazilian diplomacy was unable to anticipate mainly because of the way the Foreign Ministry has conducted relations with neighboring nations. The GOB's proclamation of regional leadership resulted in resentment demonstrated in public postures opposing Brazil, such as the case of Brazil's claim for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council and in the elections for the WTO and IDB.... Instead of union between the region's nations, what has occurred is a quick movement of fragmentation and disintegration.... With ambitious proposals such as a mega gas pipeline and the creation of a South Atlantic Treaty Organization, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez now presents himself as the champion of South American integration.... Chavez's nationalist populism, however, is at the root of the current process of regional disintegration.... From Brazil's point of view, the logic of South American integration has always been the Brasilia-Buenos Aires axis. Today, the Caracas-Buenos Aires axis has become consolidated, as Brazil implicitly recognized by inviting Chavez, who is not an interested party, to the Puerto Iguazu meeting to discuss the Bolivian nationalization of Petrobras assets.... The next stage of the process of regional division may be the positioning regarding the US.... Once again Chavez is in the center of developments with his ALBA proposal as an alternative to the FTAA."

McMullen